

The First Edition of the 2025 Mustafa (PBUH) Prize for Young Scientists Will Be Held With the Resources Allocated From the endowment of Professor Omid Farkhorzad, the Winner of the Fifth Edition of the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize

IRAN NEWS

The Iranian Parliament Has Received a Bill Regarding International Judicial Cooperation After a 10-Year Hiatus, Which Is Expected to End the Impunity of Fugitive Criminals in at Least 40 Countries, an Iranian Official Said

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Oil Ministry at Top of First-Time Production Activities



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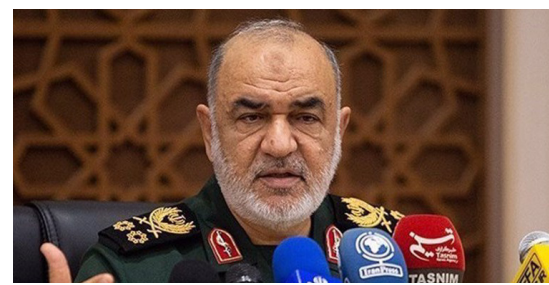
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Israeli Forces Press Gaza Offensive From North and South



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Iran's Authority Result of Resistance, Advances in Endless Wars



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says Iran has become so powerful that it "fearlessly" attacks the heart of the global arrogance. "The fact that the Islamic Republic attacks the heart of the [global] arrogance fearlessly and with the knowledge of all-round enmity and consequences shows the people's power of faith, resistance, will and progress," Major General Hossein Salami said in Semnan Province on Monday. Referring to Iran's recent Operation True Promise against Israel, Salami said, "By relying on the strength and power of the zealous Iranian nation, the operation was not carried out as a surprise, but by taking responsibility for it and broadcasting its images." "From the very first moments of the operation, Iranians took to the streets to express their support for the retaliatory attack and the IRGC," he stressed. On April 14, Iran fired more than 300 drones and missiles at military bases in the Israeli-occupied territories. The large-scale attack, dubbed Operation True Promise, was a response to a terrorist Israeli raid against Iran's consulate in the Syrian capital Damascus that killed 13 people, including seven IRGC military advisors. Salami also noted that Iran achieved success whenever it faced obstacles and sanctions. "The power of the Islamic Republic establishment today is the outcome of resistance and progress in an endless war in multiple forms with different countries of the world," he said. The Iranian nation turned sanctions into an opportunity for advancement in various fields, the IRGC chief added. Salami noted that, "The enemy's idea of sanctioning Iran was to paralyze and make it surrender, however, our nation turned the sanction into an opportunity for progress, and this power's great achievements have been displayed to the world in various fields today."



Leader Calls on Shia Muslims to Introduce Imams to World

TEHRAN, May 13 (MNA) - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has called on Shia Muslims to introduce Imams to the world. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with the scholars overseeing the Fifth Global Congress of Imam Reza (AS) on May 8. The 5th Global Congress of Imam Reza (AS) will be held from May 15 to 16 in Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province. The 5th and 6th rounds of the congress, which is scheduled to be held every two years, are titled "The Civilizational Thought of Imam Reza (AS)". "Firstly, it is truly commendable to hold such a conference and gathering within the Shia community as it is important for us to deepen our understanding of the Imams for us before sharing their teachings with others. Sometimes we focus excessively on one aspect without having a strong reason for doing so, and other aspects are ignored. At times, we may not even pay attention to that aspect and be content with the appearance of matters alone. In my opinion, one of our greatest responsibilities as Shia and as members of the Shia community is to introduce our Imams to the world." "Now some of the Imams (PBHH), such as Imam Hussein (PBUH) and the Commander of the Faithful (PBUH), are well-known for certain reasons. Others have written and spoken about them, and they are known by many including those outside of the Shia and Muslim communities. However, most of the Imams (PBUH) remain largely unknown. For instance, Imam Hassan Mujtaba,

despite his greatness, has not received the recognition he deserves. Similarly, Imam Musa Kazim, Imam Hadi, and Imam Ja'far Sadiq are yet to be known in the world despite all their great establishments and extraordinary efforts." "In my opinion, three dimensions of the lives of the Imams (PBUH) should be studied. One of those dimensions is spirituality or the holiness of the Imams (PBUH). This is a dimension that cannot be ignored and it must be discussed. However, it must be a strong discussion. Sometimes some things are said, and weak narrations are brought to support those words. We must discuss the celestial aspect of the Imams (PBUH), their spiritual, heavenly aspect. These are not things we should conceal. We must speak about the spiritual, heavenly aspects of the Imams (PBUH), he added. "The second aspect we must consider is their words and teachings in various fields, which you gentlemen have also mentioned. This includes issues related to life and various matters that human beings need, such as ethics, social interactions, religion, and religious rulings. Our Imams have discussed these matters, and their words form a comprehensive school of thought. This should be spoken of. Some of these aspects that we may overlook at times have great significance in the world. Consider the issue of animal rights, for instance. There are so many narrations from our Imams regarding the issue of protecting and caring for animals and animal rights," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

West Asia Peace, Security Hinge on Disarmament of Israel, End of Palestine's Occupation



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says the establishment of full and genuine peace, stability and security in the West Asia region hinges on the disarmament of Israel and an end to its occupation of Palestine. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in an address to the third Iranian-Arab Dialogue Conference, dubbed "For Cooperation and Interaction", in Tehran. He added that the people of Palestine have been deprived of all their rights and Israel's "unequal war" in Gaza over the past seven months once more showed the reality of the Palestinian issue to the world. The Israeli regime took shape based on violation of Palestinians' rights, occupation, warmongering and extremism and lacks the potential to have peaceful coexistence with regional nations, he noted. The top Iranian diplomat lashed out at the United States for providing Israel with full and unconditional support for the regime's crimes and genocide against the people of Palestine. The US has also violated all its false and deceptive claims of advocating peace, democracy and human rights, he emphasized. Amir-Abdollahian said sustainable peace and stability will not be established in Palestine and the Arab-Islamic region unless the rights of the Palestinian people are realized. He emphasized that regional nations, particularly Palestinians, have no option but to continue their resistance to achieve their absolute rights. As a responsible actor and supporter of international peace and security, Iran stresses the importance of holding a referendum as a political solution to the Palestinian issue and establishing a Middle East free of nuclear weapons, the foreign minister added.

Hezbollah Unveils Heavy Rocket in Attack on Israeli Military Outpost



TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement has employed for the first time a heavy rocket to strike an Israeli military position in the northern sector of the 1948-occupied territories in retaliation for the bloody war on Gaza. Hezbollah said in a brief statement that it had launched several Jihad Mughniyeh rockets, named after a member of the group who was killed in 2015 in an operation in Syria that was attributed to Israel, at a gathering of Israeli troops near the Zebdine site in the occupied Lebanese Shebaa Farms at 4:25 p.m. local time (1325 GMT) on Sunday.

Mughniyeh was the son of Imad Mughniyeh, a senior figure in Hezbollah who was assassinated in Damascus in 2008. The statement added that the projectiles hit the designated targets precisely, and caused significant damage in the area. Earlier, the Lebanese resistance fighters targeted an Israeli military vehicle, which had surveillance equipment mounted on, with several guided missiles. Technical devices at the Hounin barracks were also hit and destroyed by a number of missiles. Hezbollah fighters targeted surveillance equipment at the Israeli al-Malkia military outpost as well, destroying the devices. Meanwhile, the Lebanese resistance group released footage of an operation in which its fighters targeted sites and surveillance equipment belonging to the Israeli military near the southern Lebanese border. Hezbollah also documented separate strikes on the Ramia military site, and a building housing Israeli troops in Shtula moshav in the northern part of the Israeli-occupied lands.

Iran Says U.S., Israeli Human Rights Two Sides of the Same Coin

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry says American and Israeli human rights are two sides of the same coin as they both commit gross rights violations against prisoners. In a post on his X account on Monday, Nasser Kan'ani said the results of an investigation conducted by CNN show that the Israeli regime's military forces are torturing Palestinian prisoners in a secret detention center in the Negev region in occupied Palestine. "The American and Zionist human rights are two sides of the same coin, one in Negev, and the other in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib," he wrote. The CNN report, released on Friday, cited statements from whistleblowers working at Israel's Sde Teiman military detention camp which showed that the regime has been committing systemic abuses against people it has detained during its ongoing war on Gaza. The witnesses said Palestinian prisoners have been restrained, blindfolded, and forced to wear diapers during their detention time in Sde Teiman which is located in the Negev desert, in the south of the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories near Gaza. Prisoners were not allowed to move, talk, or even peek when they were blindfolded while guards unleashed large dogs on sleeping detainees or beat them out of spite and for revenge, the report said of the prison. In a statement issued late on Friday, the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas said the CNN report was only the tip of the iceberg and reflects only a small portion of the atrocities committed against Palestinian detainees in the occupying regime's "human slaughterhouses."



Gaza's Healthcare System Few Hours Away From Collapse



GAZA (Dispatches) - The Palestinian health ministry in the Gaza Strip, which is enduring a genocidal Israeli war, has warned about the imminent collapse of the coastal sliver's entire healthcare system. "We are only a few hours away from the collapse of the health system in the Gaza Strip," the ministry said in a statement on Monday. It attributed the likelihood to "the failure to bring in the fuel [that is] needed to operate electricity generators at hospitals and ambulances, and transport employees." On May 7, the Israeli military seized the Rafah crossing in southern Gaza, which borders Egypt and serves as the main point of entry for aid supplies, including fuel, into Gaza. The move came as part of the regime's efforts to tighten its grip on the city of Rafah, which it claims contains the "last" major strongholds of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas. The movement has proven the regime wrong by re-establishing its presence elsewhere across the coastal sliver and launching heavy attacks against Israeli forces and the occupied territories from those locations. The regime has been waging the war against Gaza since October 7 in response to Al-Aqsa Storm, a retaliatory operation by the Palestinian territory's resistance groups. More than 35,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have died as a result of the brutal military onslaught so far. The war has already taken a heavy toll on Gaza's healthcare system by killing at least 500 medical personnel and resulting in the destruction of dozens of hospitals throughout the Palestinian territory.

IRAN NEWS



Tehran, Caracas Enjoy Common Goals

TEHRAN (IP) - Chargé d'affaires of the Venezuelan embassy in Tehran said that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always stood by Venezuela in difficult times because Tehran and Caracas share common anti-imperialist goals. Katuska Josephine Cromo, the Minister Plenipotentiary at the Venezuelan Embassy in Tehran, on Sunday at the Hall of Fame and Honors of Imam Khomeini International University (RA) in Qazvin, emphasized that cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been a high priority for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. She added that Iran not only achieved great successes in the world with its scientific development but also achieved great victories in anti-imperialism. Katuska Josephine Cromo stressed that Venezuela is interested in cooperating with the Islamic Republic of Iran as Tehran has made significant progress, especially in the field of education and science. Venezuelan diplomat added that, in this regard, more students will be sent to Iran in the future in the form of larger groups to study because the advancement of technology is important for the future of all nations and countries. The Minister Plenipotentiary of the Venezuelan embassy in Tehran expressed hope that Venezuela can follow Iran's example in progress and that cooperation between the two countries will continue.

Int'l Bodies Must Focus on Promoting Welfare of Afghan People



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for political affairs Ali Bagheri Kani has said that international organizations working in Afghanistan should focus on promoting security and welfare of people there. Bagheri Kani was speaking on Sunday in Tehran during a meeting with Roza Isakovna Otunbayeva, the special representative of the UN chief for Afghanistan and head of the world body's assistance mission in that country. The Iranian official said that the US military presence in Afghanistan was the main reason behind instability and insecurity there, adding that international organizations should now focus their work on guaranteeing security and promoting the welfare of the Afghan people following the withdrawal of the U.S. The UN envoy said on her part that the situation in Afghanistan is complicated, which needs coordination between regional and extra-regional players that help in the development process in that country. She called for the Islamic Republic of Iran to help in that coordination and also interact with the de facto government in Afghanistan.



Oil Ministry at Top of First-Time Production Activities

TEHRAN (Shana) - Vice-President for Scientific, Technology and Knowledge-Based Economy, Ruhollah Dehghani Firouzabadi, says that the Oil Ministry has won the first rank for the first-time production of strategic goods. Speaking at a meeting of cabinet on Sunday, he said that the oil ministry had been able to acquire the rank for the third time in a row adding "in our view, creating a real and sustainable market for knowledge-based companies is the best kind of supporting them, and fortunately the petroleum ministry is a pioneer in this area." Referring to the petroleum ministry's efforts to promote knowledge-based activities, he said: during the 2.5 years of the 13th administration in office, the ministry has expanded its cooperation with the knowledge-based companies from 150 to 700 companies. He added that implementation of just 60 percent of the agreements between knowledge-based companies and the petroleum ministry had enabled the country to save more than 1.5 billion dollars. Later this week, in the signing ceremonies of 11 oil industry contacts and memorandums of understanding (MoU) at the closing day of the Iran Oil Show 2024 on Saturday, the vice president for scientific and technology had said: "frankly speaking, during the past two years, the petroleum

ministry has paved the way for oil industry to turn into a knowledge-based business." "Creating a real and stable market for knowledge-based companies is the best support we can do for these businesses and fortunately the petroleum ministry has won the first rank in this regard." He noted. Elsewhere in his remarks, he said that over the past 20 years more than 10 thousand knowledge-based companies had been formed in the country adding the oil industry has provided the best opportunities for the national economy to become knowledge-based. Referring to a 12-article agreement signed in February 2023, worth 2 billion dollars, he said that 60 percent of those agreements were either on the verge of signing contract or delivering goods. Comparing the former administration's performance in which getting just a project was a success for knowledge-based companies, he said: today the important thing is the quality and quantity of these companies and trusting in their performance. "Our department has granted 250 first-time production permissions to the petroleum ministry of which 110 permissions have started construction," he concluded.

India Adheres to Commitments to Develop Chabahar Port



CHABAHAR (IRNA) - New Delhi lives up to its obligations to develop the Iranian port of Chabahar, the Indian Ambassador to Iran Rudra Gaurav Shresth says. Before long, a new chapter of cooperation between New Delhi and Tehran will open to deploy advanced equipment in the port of Chabahar and increase the transportation of commodities, Rudra Gaurav Shresth said on Monday while visiting Port of Shahid Beheshti in the southeastern city of Chabahar. India is committed to increasing capacity, efficiency, and development of equipment in the Iranian port, he noted. Officials have developed port terminals, equipment, and facilities of Shahid Beheshti Port, which are effective in exporting and importing goods, he further noted. In the mid-January, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said that he and his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar have had discussions over "strategic connections", including the development of Iran's Chabahar Port and the significance of the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC).

Isfahan Refinery to Implement 50 AI Projects



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The deputy head of the Isfahan Petro-Refinery Holding Artificial Intelligence Systems announced planning for the implementation of 50 artificial intelligence projects at the refinery.

Mansour Khademi pointed to the goals of the Artificial Intelligence Deputy Office at Isfahan Refinery and said that considering that the strategic document of AI has been approved by the Board of Directors at the refinery, 50 different projects have been defined with the subject of artificial intelligence.

There are plans to use AI in all divisions of the Isfahan Refinery which includes administrative and technical systems, repairs and maintenance services, Health, Safety and Environment (HSE), he said.

Upgrading the level of the organizational culture is one of the other outcomes of using the technologies related to artificial intelligence, he said, adding that all these technologies are executed by domestic knowledge-based companies, ISNA reported.

According to the outlook defined for the current year (started March 20, 2024), the Isfahan Refinery will be the leader of the companies in the Middle East in the field of using sophisticated artificial intelligence systems, Khademi added.

Ministry of Agriculture to Focus on Export-Based Production

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - Iran's Minister of Agriculture said his ministry is concentrating on export-based production in the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20, 2024). Speaking in a session held in the presence of senior managers of the ministry, Mohammad Ali Nikbakht said more than \$1 billion of agricultural products were exported from the country in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023, to March 19, 2024), showing a 13 and 23 percent hike in weight and value respectively compared to a year earlier. He pointed to the current year's motto "Production Jump with the People's Participation" and

added that his ministry will make efforts to materialize the objectives of the motto. Nikbakht called on the responsible organizations and companies to provide exporters of agricultural products with the necessary facilities in order to spur exports and export activities, IRNA reported. Elsewhere in his remarks, the agriculture minister termed investing in the aquaculture and fisheries sectors as an opportunity for realizing the goals of the production jump, noting that fisheries and aquaculture sectors have ample capacities and they can also improve the productivity of soil and water.



Close Ties with Pakistan Highly Significant for Iran

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The foreign minister of Iran highlighted the great importance that the country attaches to the expansion of relations with neighboring Pakistan.

A consultation meeting on the consular affairs of Iran's missions in Pakistan was convened under the auspices of the Foreign Ministry's Deputy for Consular Issues, Parliament, and Iranian Expatriates' Affairs with the presence of Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Tehran on Sunday.

In comments at the meeting, Amir-Abdollahian highlighted the importance that Iran attaches to the enhancement of relations with Pakistan, hailing the Iranian president's recent visit to Pakistan as highly beneficial and constructive.

He also called for the identification of the challenges and opportunities in the course of bilateral relations and for the formulation of program-oriented feasible plans to expand bilateral relations between Iran and Pakistan.

Highlighting the importance of consular services and facilities in bolstering people-to-people communication and economic and commercial cooperation, the minister appreciated the efforts in this realm and urged continued endeavors to address problems and shortcomings.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi paid an official visit to Pakistan in April, held meetings with top Pakistani officials in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore, and signed eight cooperation agreements with the Muslim neighbor.

IMF Staff, Argentina Agree Loan Review to Help Unlock \$800m

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Staff of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Argentine authorities have reached an agreement on the eighth review of the country's \$44 billion extended fund facility arrangement, as reforms under President Javier Milei have improved macroeconomic stability, the IMF said on Monday. The IMF said the decision, which will unlock a disbursement of close to \$800 million if it gets the final sign-off from the fund's board of directors, followed better-than-expected first-quarter performance in Argentina. Milei took office in December vowing to tackle triple-digit inflation, contracting economic activity and reserves in the red. He rolled out a sweeping fiscal reform, tightening government spending sharply. The changes have helped Argentina rebuild depleted foreign currency reserves, post fiscal surpluses at the start of the year and stabilize the peso currency. Markets have rallied and inflation is coming down on a monthly basis since a December peak. The economy, however, is stalling, with falling consumption and manufacturing, a challenge to Milei. Poverty is also rising.



IRAN NEWS

Russia Widens Kharkiv Front in Ukraine With Small Assault Groups



KYIV (Dispatches) - Russia pressed its ground assault into the north of Ukraine's Kharkiv region on Monday, attacking new areas with small groups to try to widen the front and stretch Ukrainian forces, the regional governor said. Moscow's troops entered Ukraine near its second largest city of Kharkiv on Friday, opening a new, northeastern front in a war that has for almost two years been largely fought in the east and south. The advance could draw some of Kyiv's depleted forces away from the east, where Russia has been slowly advancing. "The enemy is trying to deliberately stretch it (the front line), attacking in small groups, but in new directions, so to speak," Governor Oleh Syniehubov said in televised comments. "The situation is difficult. Russia's forces were driving towards the town of Vovchansk about 5 km (3 miles) from the Russian border, as well as the village of Lyptsi which lies north of Kharkiv, he said. Kyiv's troops are managing to defend all of the approaches to Vovchansk, he said, but Moscow's forces are trying to establish themselves at a meat plant on the outskirts of the town, according to the settlement's military administration. Syniehubov said about 5,700 people had been evacuated from in and around Vovchansk and urged the remaining residents, believed by local officials to number about 300, to leave. Volunteers went from house to house, pounding on doors to persuade residents still in the town to prepare for evacuation. Vovchansk police chief Maksym Stetsyna said the town had been shelled repeatedly by artillery and mortar.

Israeli Forces Press Gaza Offensive From North and South



CAIRO (Dispatches) - Israeli forces pushed deep into the ruins of Gaza's northern edge on Monday to recapture an area from Hamas fighters, while in the south tanks and troops pushed across a highway into Rafah, leaving Palestinian civilians scrambling to find safety. Some of the most intense fighting for weeks is raging in both the north and south. Israeli operations in Rafah, which borders Egypt, have closed a main crossing point for aid. Humanitarian groups say this has worsened an already dire situation. Hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing again. Around half of Gaza's population took sanctuary there after Israel ordered evacuations from northern Gaza in October. Gaza's health authority appealed for international pressure to reopen access via the southern border to allow in aid, medical supplies and fuel to power generators and ambulances. "The wounded and sick suffer a slow death because there is no treatment and supplies and they cannot travel," it said. A foreign U.N. security staff member was killed on Monday when a U.N.-marked vehicle travelling to a hospital in Rafah was struck - the first international U.N. fatality in the Gaza war, a U.N. spokesperson said, bringing the total death toll of U.N. personnel to around 190. In northern Gaza's Jabalia, a sprawling refugee camp built for displaced Palestinians 75 years ago, Israeli forces pushed into an area where they claimed to have dismantled Hamas months ago. Residents fled along rubble-strewn streets carrying bags of belongings. Tank shells landed in the centre of the camp and health officials said they had recovered 20 bodies from overnight airstrikes. "We don't know where to go. We have been displaced from one place to the next... We are running in the streets. I saw it with my own eyes. I saw the tank and the bulldozer. It is on that street," said one woman, who did not give her name. An Israeli air strike on a house in Al-Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza Strip killed at least eight people, said Mahmoud Basal, a spokesperson of the Gaza Civil Emergency Service. He said several other people were wounded and missing.

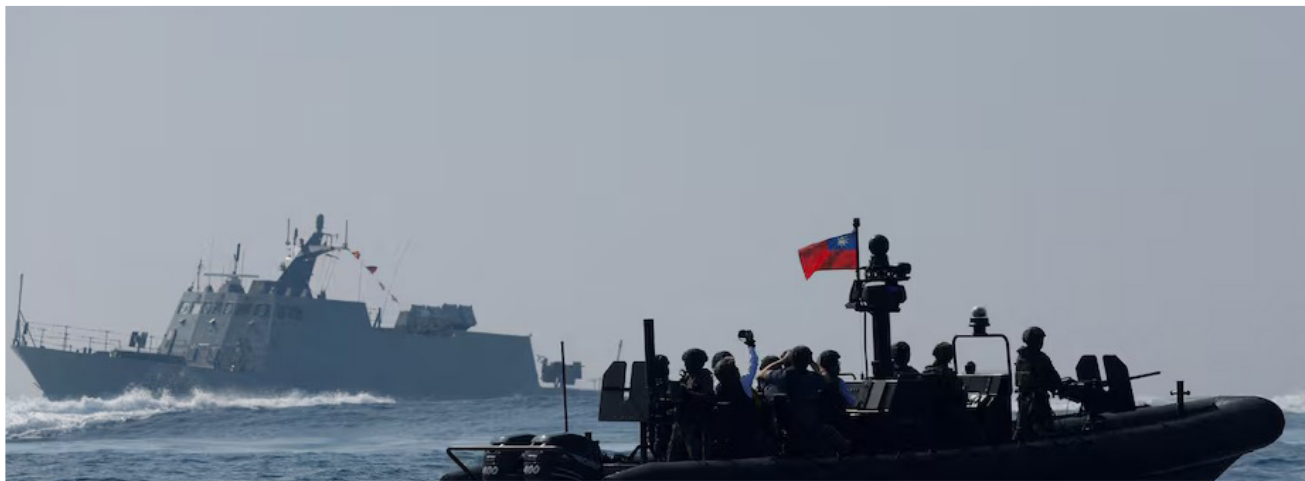
The Palestinian death toll in the war has now surpassed 35,000, with 57 killed in the past 24 hours, according to Gaza health officials, whose figures do not differentiate between civilians and fighters. Israeli troops are seeking to wipe out Hamas. A senior U.S. State Department official on Monday said Washington did not think that goal of total victory was "likely or possible." The militant group, which has said it is committed to Israel's destruction, burst into Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 and taking more than 250 hostages, by Israeli tallies. Hamas' armed wing said because of Israeli bombardments it had lost contact with militants guarding four Israeli hostages, including U.S.-Israeli citizen Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who appeared in a video released by Hamas in late April. Attending a Memorial Day ceremony on Monday to mark Israel's fallen soldiers, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the war against Hamas was a struggle to secure Israel's "existence, liberty, security and prosperity." "Our war of independence is not over yet," he said. In Rafah, Israel stepped up aerial and ground bombardments on eastern areas, killing people in an airstrike on a house in the Brazil neighbourhood. Residents said Israeli air and ground bombardments were intensifying and tanks had cut off the main north-south Salahuddin road. "The tanks cut the Salahuddin road east of the city, the forces are now in the southeast side, building up near the built-up area. The situation is dreadful and the sounds of explosions never stopped," said Bassam, 57, from the Shaboura neighbourhood in Rafah. "People continue to leave Rafah ... no place looks safe now and people do not want to escape at the last minute," he told Reuters via a chat app. UNRWA, the main U.N. aid agency in Gaza, estimated that about 360,000 people had fled the southern city since the Israeli military gave its first evacuation order a week ago. They are moving to empty tracts of land, including Al-Mawasi, a small strip along the coast, designated as an expanded humanitarian area by Israel.

North Macedonian President's Inauguration Revives Name Dispute With Greece



ATHENS (Dispatches) - Greece threatened to hinder North Macedonia's bid to join the EU on Monday after newly elected president Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova called her country just "Macedonia" during a speech, reviving a long-running dispute over the name. Siljanovska-Davkova - who got backing from a resurgent nationalist party in last week's vote - used the formerly widely used name during her inauguration on Sunday, violating a U.N.-brokered agreement between Athens and Skopje. Greece has long said the use of the name by its neighbour implies territorial claims on a Greek province which is also called Macedonia. "Any progress in our bilateral relations, as well as any step by Skopje towards Europe hinge on their honest respect of the agreement," Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said on Monday. The president's use of the name was "unlawful and unacceptable," he added. The EU also sounded a warning. "For North Macedonia to continue its successful path on EU accession it is paramount that the country continues on the path of reforms and full respect for its binding agreements," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen wrote on X on Sunday. Siljanovska-Davkova's office said the president signed her oath using the country's constitutional name of North Macedonia and that she would "adhere to all official applications." It added, however: "In her public appearances, the Macedonian president has the right to use the name Macedonia, as an act of personal right to self-determination and self-identification."

U.S. and Taiwan Navies Quietly Held Pacific Drills in April



TAIPEI (Dispatches) - The U.S. and Taiwan navies conducted joint drills in the Pacific in April that, officially, did not take place, four people briefed on the matter said, as the two militaries boost cooperation amid rising Chinese military threats. Washington and Taipei have been expanding their military cooperation in recent years amid almost daily Chinese incursions into Taiwan's air defense identification zone and drills by Chinese forces near the island. U.S.-Taiwan military engagement, including visits and training, are kept low-key and are often not officially confirmed because of China's objection to any military contacts between Washington and Taipei. China claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, which the island strongly rejects. The drills, which were not publicized, took place last month in the Western Pacific, according to the sources, who requested anonymity given the sensitivity of the matter. One source said "multiple

military assets" were involved. A second source said the drills did not officially exist and were dubbed "unplanned sea encounters", pointing to a tacit agreement in which both sides claim the exercises were simply the result of coincidental encounters. "It's like I am dining in this restaurant and you also happen to be here," the source said. "Then it looks like I am only sharing the same table with someone." That source also said about half a dozen navy ships from both sides, including frigates and supply and support vessels, participated in the days-long exercises, which were designed to practice "basic" operations such as communications, refueling and resupply. Taiwan's navy said in a statement to Reuters that to handle unexpected scenarios at sea and to minimize "interference" with each other, the navy "acts in concert with the U.S.-promoted Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea", also known as CUES.



Sunak Appeals to Voters Before National Election

LONDON (Dispatches) - British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called on voters on Monday to trust him to keep them safe in an increasingly dangerous world, listing his achievements in an unashamedly political campaign speech ahead of a national election due at some point this year. With his governing Conservatives trailing the opposition Labour Party in the polls, Sunak used a speech at a conservative think tank to try to convince voters that only he could defend the country against an "axis of authoritarian states". He attacked Labour, saying the opposition party could not match his pledge to increase defense spending or tackle illegal immigration and only he had "a clear plan" for the future -- accusations rejected by Labor leader Keir Starmer. "The next election that our country is going to face is the general election and the choice of that general election is clear -- it's about the future versus the past," Sunak said at the Policy Exchange think tank. "We have a clear understanding of what the future entails -- the most dangerous time that we have known in a long time but also the most transformational -- and it is only us, it is only me, that has the bold ideas and the clear plan that will deliver a secure future of the country." Labour responded by accusing the Conservatives of overseeing "costly chaos".

Erdogan Hosts Greek PM, Sees No Unsolvable Problems in Bilateral Ties

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan told Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis during talks in Ankara on Monday that there were "no unsolvable problems" between their countries. Turkey and Greece, NATO allies and historic foes, have long been at odds over issues including maritime boundaries, energy resources in the eastern Mediterranean, flights over the Aegean Sea, and ethnically split Cyprus. After years of tensions that brought the two to the brink of conflict, they have started taking high-profile steps to improve ties, especially since both leaders were re-elected last year. "Despite disagreements, we focus on a positive agenda by keeping our dialogue channels open," Erdogan told a joint press conference with Mitsotakis. Mitsotakis said the leaders' frequent meetings in recent months had "proved that we neighbours can establish an approach of mutual understanding, not as an exception but as a productive normality." "We showed today that alongside our proven disagreements, we can chart a parallel page of agreements," he added. Erdogan visited Athens last December and the two countries signed the "Declaration of Athens" aimed at setting the base for a roadmap to rebooting relations. They agreed to boost trade, keep communication channels open, carry out military confidence-building measures to reduce tensions, and work on problems that have kept them apart. The two leaders disagreed over how to classify

the Palestinian militant group Hamas. Erdogan reiterated his view that it is a "resistance movement" and said he was saddened by the Greek view - shared by many other Western countries - that it is a terrorist organization. "Let's agree to disagree," Mitsotakis replied. On Sunday, Mitsotakis told Turkish daily Milliyet that his visit to Ankara - the first in five years - was an opportunity to evaluate progress and to reiterate Athens' commitment to improving ties.



Celtics Hold Off Depleted Cavs to Take 3-1 NBA Series Lead



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - The Boston Celtics fought off a spirited challenge from short-handed Cleveland, beating the Cavaliers 109-102 to take a commanding 3-1 lead in their NBA Eastern Conference semi-final series. Jayson Tatum scored 33 points and grabbed 11 rebounds and Jaylen Brown added 27 points for the Celtics, who will try to finish off the best-of-seven series at home on Wednesday. The Cavaliers were dealt a heavy blow when Donovan Mitchell, who had averaged more than 35 points over the six prior games, was ruled out with a calf injury, joining starting center Jarrett Allen on the sidelines. NBA superstar LeBron James, who led the Cavs to their only NBA title back in 2016, was sitting courtside, but with Mitchell absent the Cavs ultimately didn't have enough firepower. The Cavs kept the pressure on, taking the lead briefly on Darius Garland's driving basket early in the third quarter -- their first lead since the first quarter. But the Celtics quickly reasserted themselves and led by 10 going into the final period. Cleveland, on the back of 30 points from Garland, pulled within five points three times in the final four minutes, but Brown, fed

by Tatum, connected on a three-pointer with 1:09 to play that effectively sealed it. "It's a game of runs," Tatum said after the Celtics struggled to put the depleted Cavaliers away. "It's not going to be perfect every single time. They're going to make shots, but it's our job to figure it out." The Celtics, winners of a league-best 64 regular-season games, used a 12-0 scoring run to take charge in the first quarter, Tatum scoring 16 points in the period. Boston led by as many as 13 in the second quarter but Tatum cooled off and Cleveland, buoyed by 11 of their 15 three-pointers in the first half, battled back, twice cutting the deficit to one point before going into the break down by five. The Celtics caught a break early in the second quarter, when Brown was called for only a common foul, rather than a flagrant, after he fell backwards into Max Strus and grabbed Strus's ankle as the Cavs player -- himself struggling to stay upright -- stepped over his head. Cleveland coach J.B. Bickerstaff was more concerned at the fact that Boston went to the free-throw line 24 times compared to Cleveland's seven.

Djokovic's Rome Exit Opens Door for Sinner to Grab Top Ranking at Roland Garros



LONDON (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic's shock exit from the Italian Open on Sunday could prove to be a decisive moment in the race for the world number one spot, as the top-ranked Serb prepares for his French Open title defence with Jannik Sinner poised to leapfrog him. Two days after accidentally being hit on the head by a water bottle while signing autographs in Rome, an off-colour Djokovic crashed to his earliest defeat in the tournament he has won six times after a 6-2 6-3 third-round thrashing by Alejandro Tabilo. Djokovic will remain 1,090 points ahead of Sinner before the year's second Grand Slam begins on May 26, but the 36-year-old is on shaky ground as he will be defending 2,000 points in Paris and winning the title may not be enough to stay on top. "It was a very unfortunate, unlucky situation ... that guy leaned over the fence, and the bottle dropped from his rucksack and landed on my head," Djokovic said, reflecting on the freak accident that hurt his chances to pull away from Sinner. "It was unexpected. I wasn't even looking up. Then I felt a very strong hit in the head. That has really impacted me. After that I got the medical care. Been through half-an-hour, an hour of nausea, dizziness, blood, a lot of different things."

Duran Double Salvages Draw for Aston Villa Against Liverpool

LONDON (Dispatches) - Jhon Duran struck twice in the final five minutes to salvage a 3-3 draw for Aston Villa against Liverpool but they fell short of guaranteeing a place in next season's Champions League on Monday. Villa looked set for a fourth consecutive defeat in all competitions as an Emiliano Martinez own goal and strikes from Cody Gakpo and Jarrell Quansah put the visitors on course for victory in Jurgen Klopp's final away game in charge. But substitute Duran's double edged Unai Emery's men closer to Europe's top table for the first time since 1983. Victory for title-chasing Manchester City at Spurs would secure Villa's place in the top four. But they are stumbling over the finish line as the strain of combining a challenge for the Champions League alongside a run to the Europa Conference League semi-finals has taken its toll. "Just a brilliant effort towards the end," said Villa captain John McGinn. "It's been a tough couple of weeks. The manager won't admit it but the boys are out on their feet, giving absolutely everything. "We'll have our Man City tops on tomorrow night." Martinez's return to fitness after he missed last weekend's 1-0 defeat at Brighton should have been a major boost for the home side. But the Argentine World Cup winner's howler handed Liverpool the opening goal after just two minutes as he fumbled Harvey Elliott's deflected cross into his own net. Villa did respond positively as Ollie Watkins burned Quansah for pace and pulled back a cross for Youri Tielemans to equalise. However, momentum swung back in Liverpool's favour in an end-to-end encounter when Gakpo tapped in after Martinez could only parry Joe Gomez's effort. Villa should have been level again before half-time when Diego Carlos somehow turned wide with the goal gaping after nudging Watkins out the way.



Barcelona Beat Real Sociedad to Move Second



BARCELONA (Dispatches) - Lamine Yamal and Raphinha struck to earn Barcelona a 2-0 win over Real Sociedad on Monday, taking their team second, a point above Catalan rivals Girona. Defeat is a setback to La Real's ambitions of playing Europa League football next season, leaving them seventh behind Real Betis, who won on Sunday. Last season's champions Barcelona are playing for nothing but pride in the final weeks of a disappointing campaign, and finishing above high-flying minnows Girona is imperative to achieve even a modicum of that. Real Madrid sealed their title win at a canter after Barcelona were beaten 4-2 by Girona little over a week ago. Barca's brightest light Yamal opened the scoring after 40 minutes and Raphinha added a late penalty to seal the win. "La Real are a great team, it's an important victory for us, we had a good game in general," Barca coach Xavi told Movistar. Xavi benched Uruguayan centre-back Ronald Araujo, bereft of form this season and whose red card against Paris Saint-Germain contributed heavily to their Champions League collapse. With Madrid swiping La Liga back off the Catalans, they end the season trophyless and licking their wounds. Xavi, who will stay in charge next season after ditching his exit plan, started defender Inigo Martinez in place of Araujo and Pedri Gonzalez in midfield. The Canary Islander is still building form and fitness after a string of injury problems ahead of Euro 2024, and helped Barca control the game. Striker Robert Lewandowski was unusually active in his team's pressing, perhaps motivated by the race to finish as La Liga's top scorer.

Mbappe Named France's Player of the Year

PARIS (Dispatches) - Kylian Mbappe was named France's player of the year on Monday at an awards ceremony in Paris, as he comes to the end of his seven-season stay with Paris Saint-Germain. Mbappe, 25, picked up the prize for the best player in Ligue 1 at the UNFP (French players' union) Trophies gala for the fifth time in a row after a season in which he has scored 44 goals in all competitions for PSG. The France captain last week confirmed he will leave PSG at the end of the campaign when his contract expires, with Real Madrid expected to be his next destination. "It is a page that is turning, a chapter of my life that is going to close," Mbappe said. "Ligue 1 will always have an important place in my life. It is the only league I have known in my career up to now. "I have always tried to be an honourable representative of this league," he added. "I will miss it for sure. It is a part of my life that is coming to an end. What is coming next is very exciting but that is something else." Mbappe played his final home game for PSG on Sunday and scored as the champions suffered a shock 3-1 defeat against Toulouse. That goal took him to 27 for the season in Ligue 1, eight goals more than the next best marksman, Lille's Canadian striker Jonathan David. The season is not finished yet, with Mbappe's PSG having two more Ligue 1 games to play this week before the French Cup final against Lyon on May 25. Mbappe saw off the other nominees for an award voted for by his fellow players and handed over by Marie-Jose Perec, the French former 200m

and 400m Olympic champion. His PSG teammate Ousmane Dembele had also been in contention along with Pierre Lees-Melou of Brest, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang of Marseille and Edon Zhegrova of Lille. PSG's domestic dominance was reflected in the other awards, with teenage midfielder Warren Zaire-Emery named young player of the season and Gianluigi

Donnarumma the best goalkeeper. Eric Roy of Brest was named coach of the year after leading the modest Brittany club to European qualification for the first time in their history -- with one game left they are guaranteed to finish at least fifth, meaning a Europa League place at worst.

